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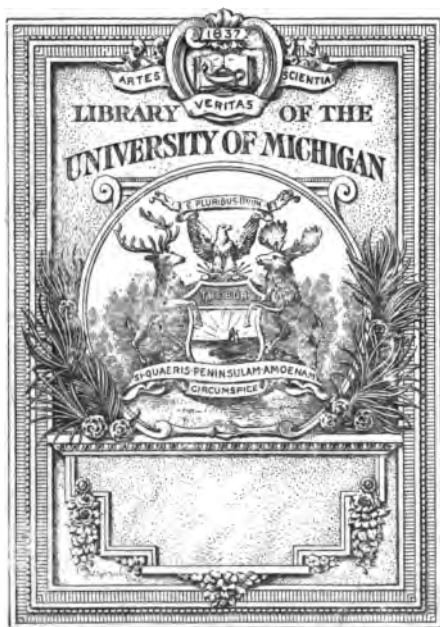
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BY

ELSIE FOGERTY,

"Author of First Notes on Elocution," &c.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY ISABEL BONUS.



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INTRODUCTION.

THESE scenes are the first of the series not reproduced or adapted from standard authors. "The Queen's Jest" will be found useful as a pastoral for girls only, and the other two scenes add to the small number of costume scenes for two girls.

All these can be given on the draped stage, but suggestions for scenery have been made in the Costume Edition.

The sense of the period represented is important in each scene, and should be thoroughly brought out in the bearing and action of the actors as well as in their costume.

A larger programme can be made by playing "Peint par François Boucher" as a "curtain raiser"; the first act of "The Queen's Jest"; two or more of Mr. Austin Dobson's exquisite Idylls as "interludes," and concluding with the second act of "The Queen's Jest."

Valerie and Hortense can play the two ladies in "The Idyll of the Carp"; Des Grieux, the Princess, and the Marquise, the three characters in "The Cap that Fits"; the whole court returning as the jealous ladies go up, and Des Grieux remaining on the stage.

The Queen, who is suggested by the personality of Marie Antoinette without being historically accurate, should have throughout a touch of sorrowful presentiment.

The Princess is the representative of the strict etiquette of the older school which the Queen loved to defy.

Madeleine and Valerie are kind-hearted and sympathetic, but the rest cannot regard a peasant as capable of human feeling.

Des Grieux is one of the wiser spirits who saw the storm coming but felt powerless to avert it, and spent their lives in a vain effort to guard the person of the Queen.

Pierre must be a rough unconscious little lad, easily startled and suspicious, like a young animal, but with a quiet contempt for the silly ways and meaningless talk of the fine folk.

Margot and Jacqueline are the Queen's servants, and not really peasant folk; the action being supposed to pass in the sham pastoral setting of the Little Trianon.

Sybil and Damaris are conventionally contrasted, but Damaris's Puritanism is only lately acquired; she and Sybil having been brought up together. Sybil's vehemence soon fails her, and Damaris's strength prevails when action is necessary.

"Peint par François Boucher" is entirely suggested by Mr. Austin Dobson's beautiful "Story of Rosine." The Marquise is at first merely amusing herself and trying to break the infatuation which has drawn Boucher away from his place at court. But the distress she causes bores and annoys her very much. She might almost be sympathetic if she would allow herself to feel. At the last she is angry with herself, the painter, and Rosine for the uncomfortable experience she has passed through, and her serenity is only restored by the epigram in which she avenges herself on the absent painter.

The properties in this scene are rather difficult. The little dog should be a toy spaniel or tiny terrier, and must be small enough to be easily carried in his basket. He can be tied to the chair without the audience noticing it while the Marquise plays with him.

THE DRESSES.

"THE QUEEN'S JEST."

The Watteau dresses are best carried out in soft printed lawns and muslins, or in sateens. The fêtes at the little Trianon were distinguished by this fanciful simplicity, and silks and satins were banished.

The Princess, Des Grieux, and Pierre in his second dress should wear richer materials. Nearly every dress should have a touch of black at some point. Black tulle in the hats, or as a scarf, or black velvet at throat and wrists.

The cut of the dresses with full Watteau backs is the same in almost every case; a shorter full petticoat, puffed or lace and ribbon trimmed, and a long full overskirt and bodice cut with a pleat from the centre of the back.

In some cases the overskirt is puffed up into short shepherdess paniers, in others only caught in a few places forming a half train not much longer than the petticoat, in others flowing out into the graceful full train which is particularly becoming to tall figures. Effective hats can be made of crinkled paper or the plaited paper bands sold for the purpose.

The QUEEN.—Marie Antoinette's colours: Pale mauve, and pale leaf green both in cool silvery tones;

the under petticoat may be covered in lace, lawn kerchief lace edged, lawn and lace sleeves. White lace mittens, white shoes, hair unpowdered ; either a shady hat or the hair dressed with roses and pearls ; black velvet at throat and wrists. White crook tied with her colours.

The PRINCESS.—Dress with fuller over skirt and train in vivid deep rose or geranium colour, white underskirt. She wears no hat, but in a pastoral may have a lace scarf thrown over her head.

White Louis XV. wig, black shoes with red heels, wand tied with ribbons instead of crook, black lace mittens.

The MARQUISE DE BREAU.—Shepherdess length. Colours pale blue and pale mauve.

THE COMTESSE D'HAUTEPOULE.—Pale blush pink and pale mauve. Same type of dress.

MADELINE.—Pale China or cornflower blue and white, with touches of very deep sapphire ; white under dress, with sapphire velvet bows. Shepherdess length.

The other Ladies.—In orange and white, with black velvet bows. Straw colour and turquoise. Pure white, with pale leaf green. This is very pretty with a large " fraise " hat of pale green crinkled paper, lined with stiff white muslin. Soft grey and pale green of a bluer tone than the Queen's ; pale pink and pale blue ; the last a particularly charming combination very characteristic of the period.

The two Pages wear the Queen's colours.

MARGOT.—Snuff-coloured bodice and paniers, over deep coffee-coloured skirt, white wig, black cap, and coarse cream kerchief ; no pure white in this dress.

JACQUELINE.—Under skirt in white, with a broad red stripe, paniers of same tone of red ; black velvet

bodice, white cross-over under bodice, and cap and apron. A dainty fresh dress, finished with scarlet stockings and black buckle shoes.

TOINON.—A quaint little paniered frock in brown or dark grey, deep cream underskirt, cream cap, bare feet, or sabots.

PIERRE.—Shirt and knickers in cotton or blue linen, or holland colour. Feet bare and bandaged with unbleached bandages, or in sabots. Red cotton cap.

Second dress a little court dress of pale rose colour or deep yellow; white silk stockings, lace ruffle, black shoes with red heels. The dress trimmed with silver or gold braid. His hair may be left unpowdered and tied back with a ribband, or he may wear a white wig.

This dress should be worn till the end of the play.

DES GRIEUX.—Court dress in black moiré, lined with pale pearl grey; pearl grey or brocaded waistcoat, ruffles; black hat, sword, and hair ribband. Black shoes with red heels. White wig. Snuff box.

“LOVE LAUGHS AT THE LOCKSMITH.”

DAMARIS.—Grey voile puritan dress; white cap and collar; chatelaine with keys; pile of sheets.

SYBIL.—Straw coloured satin, with fine lawn and lace collar. The bodice cut with square tabs and laced, with hanging ends between the tabs; rosettes of deep petunia red velvet on sleeves and collar, and under the brim of hat. Large black velvet hat with white ostrich plume fastened with paste buckle.

Hair dressed in soft ringlets, bunched at one side of the head and hanging in a long “love lock” on the other. White gauntlet gloves, with gold embroidery on the backs.

"PIENT PAR FRANÇOIS BOUCHER"

ROSINE.—Dress cut like Jacqueline's, but of dull rough material, and with a loose coffee-coloured chemisette. Bare feet, bunch of violets and of snow-drops; hair loosely tied back. The whole effect as shabby and poor as possible, but neat and picturesque.

MARQUISE.—Dress like Madeleine's in the Queen's Jest, but with white Louis XV. wig. A long disguise cloak of light brown sateen, with a hood, covers her whole figure. Black shoes with red heels.

STAGE PROPERTIES.

"THE QUEEN'S JEST."

Small rustic table, three chairs, little lattice-work arbour, half blown down. In one corner a space enclosed by a small bank or curb and filled with reeds to resemble a fish pond. Arcade of creepers or balustrade at back of stage.

HAND PROPERTIES.

MARGOT.—Large can of milk, small cup of milk.

JACQUELINE.—Basket filled with small mugs or cups.

DES GRIEUX.—Lace handkerchief; snuff box; stick.

COMTESSE.—Silver wand.

MARQUISE.—Silver wand.

Several Ladies.—White crooks.

Several Ladies.—Paper roses.

PAGE.—Letter from the King.

"LOVE LAUGHS AT THE LOCKSMITH."

Large oak press. Large oak bench. Spinning wheel and stool.

HAND PROPERTIES.

Key. Pile of sheets.

"PEINT PAR FRANÇOIS BOUCHER."

Two easels draped, and with pictures on them. Screen. Large arm chair. Two smaller chairs. Wooden cage with birds in it. Curtain hiding door.

HAND PROPERTIES.

MARQUISE.—Tiny dog, spaniel or toy terrier, with thin leather lead. Fan. Pencil or long paint brush. Cocked hat made of paper. Sugar and a head of millet seed. Cloak. Small dog basket.

ROSINE.—Violets. Snowdrops.

MUSIC.

For entrance and exit of Queen "L'Air du Dauphin," a short stately march found in most "Pianoforte Instructors." It is effective played by violins and a harp for pastoral settings.

"Corydon and Phyllis" is set to "Waxen Lights are gleaming brightly," by A. Moffat, in "Album of Two-part Songs for Female Voices." Published by Augener and Co., at 1s.

Pierre's song to an old Irish air, "I wish I were on yonder Hill," by J. Robinson; published by Hutchings and Romer.

Sybil's lines are from Browning's cavalier songs, and should be sung to a lively bugle call.

PROGRAMME.

"THE QUEEN'S JEST,"

(A Watteau Pastoral)

By ELSIE FOGERTY.

SCENE—*The Gardens of the Queen's Pleasance.*

TIME—*The end of the Eighteenth Century.*

"For those were still the days
Of Halcyon weather."

AUSTIN DOBSON.

CHARACTERS.

THE QUEEN.

THE PRINCESS.

THE MARQUISE DE BREAU.

THE COMTESSE D'HAUTEPOULE.

MADELEINE.

HORTENSE.

VALERIE.

FIRST LADY.

SECOND LADY.

THIRD LADY.

MARGOT, *an old peasant woman.*

JACQUELINE, *a peasant girl.*

TOINON, *Pierre's little playfellow.*

PIERRE, *a shepherd lad of Courtré.*

DES GRIEUX, *the Queen's Chamberlain.*

1ST PAGE.

2ND PAGE.

ARGUMENT.

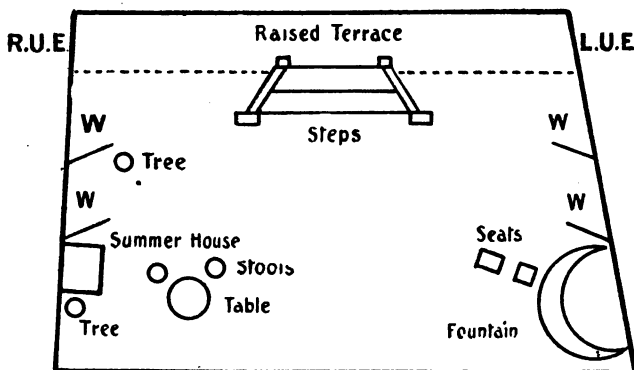
Little Pierre, the Shepherd Lad of Courtré, wanders into the Queen's pleasance looking for his two lost goats.

All night long he has hunted for them, in a great storm, with fear of a beating before him. In that storm the Dauphin's Oak has crashed through the wall of the Queen's gardens, leaving a gap through which Pierre makes his way to the very place where the Queen and her ladies come a-shepherding.

They have no squires with them, for the Queen has sent her courtiers to hunt for their wits which, quoth she, "are with His Majesty at the wars."

So for want of other idleness they play the old jest of Christopher Sly on the little sleeping lad, and he wakes to find himself hailed as the Dauphin of France.

All day they tease and mystify him, till, with the night, comes news of the King's return, and the jest having turned to more earnest than these idle folk wished, they let the boy go, to be cared for by the Queen's old Nurse, dame Margot, and to be one of the Queen's forest guards when he has had time to grow wise in woodcraft.



“THE QUEEN’S JEST.”

SCENE I.

The Gardens of the Queen’s Pleasaunce.

Across back of stage a balustrade with steps leading from the raised terrace to the level.

R., a little Summer-house, broken down by the wind, in front a rustic table ; a path runs up from the Summer-house and disappears among the bushes ; left, a clump of bushes ; near the front of the stage a small fountain and two seats, the centre is a grassy space. As the play opens voices are heard singing L. ; the song ended, PIERRE is heard calling off R. ; he enters R.W. walking slowly and crying bitterly.

*Several times
repeated off.*

*Looks about and
goes down L.*

On grass.

Pause.

*Gradually stops
crying.
Goes first L. then R.*

Very brightly.

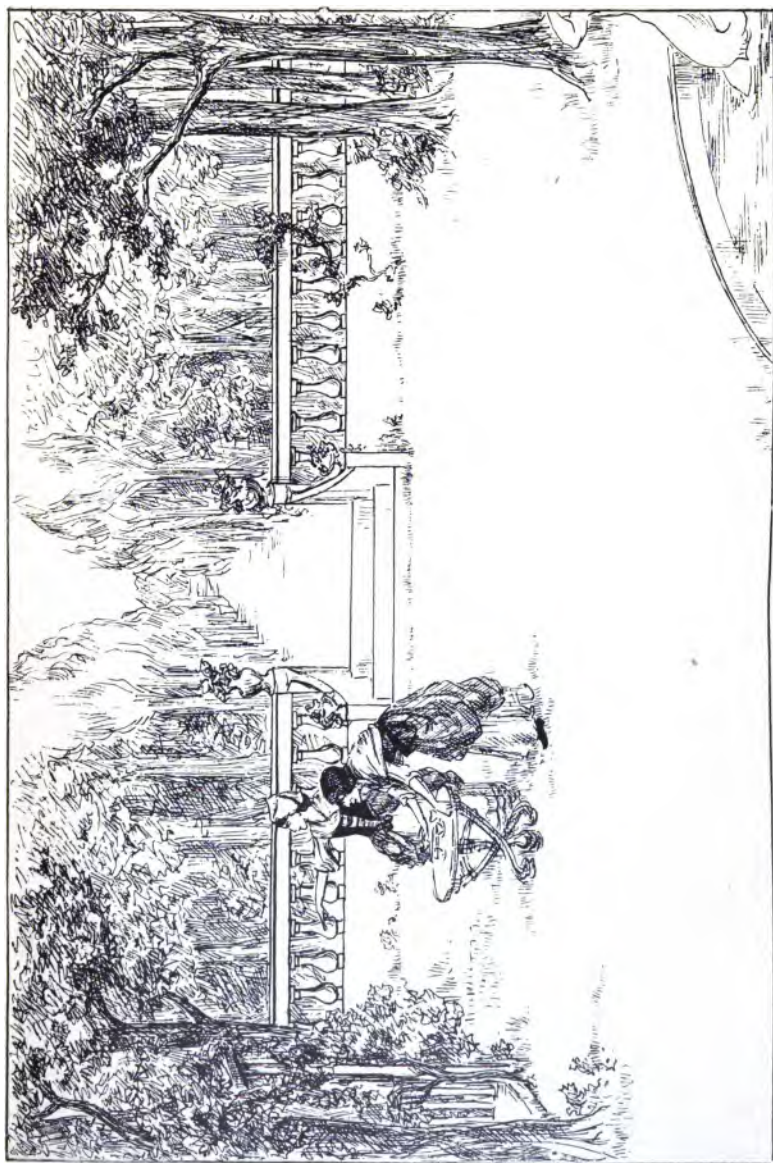
*This must be played
slowly.*

Goes up to look.

Pierre.—Gri-gri! Blanchette! . . .
. . . The evil beasts! Gri-gri!
here I thought surely they would have stayed,
the grass so fresh and green, what could the heart
of goat want better? When I saw the great
breach in the wall, I said to myself, "Here,
indeed, our Gri-gri will have gone, he was always
an eager and shameless beast, and that poor fool
Blanchette must run nose for nose with him, as
if he were a two days kid," and now after all
this weary night no more sign of them! (*He sits
left C.*) Oh, how my feet ache, how they ache,
and how Père Grosbé will beat me. (*He weeps
silently.*) Well, there's no use to sit and cry out
here, I may as well go sleep while I can, little
enough sleep when the old leather belt and I
have had a talk to-night! (*rises*) If there were
but a good haystack hereabout (*goes to Summer-
house*). For lack of a better—it will keep the sun
off at least. I wonder will the guard come and
find me here? (*looks about*) Bah! what do I care?
If only I get a bit of good sleep first I can run
faster than their fat legs can carry them—here
goes; (*he creeps into the fallen Summer-house*) Aie!
a good warm cushion to lie on—if only the guard
keeps off!

[*He curls himself up inside the house and is
soon asleep, meanwhile the song is heard
L. As it ceases MARGOT enters L. carrying
a heavy pail of milk. She sets it down
and rubs her arm ruefully.*

Margot. (*Heard calling off*) Jacqueline;
Jacqueline, idle wench! Seven, and no sign of
her! Jacqueline! old bones weigh most, they



MARGOT AND JACQUELINE.

say, but young ones move slowest. On my conscience, I wager the girl sits gaping at the yarns my fine son spins her when she should be helping his old mother ! Jacqueline !

Puts pail by table.

[Enter L. JACQUELINE running breathlessly.
She turns, waves and kisses her hand to
someone off L.

Jacqueline. Mother Margot, did you call ?

Innocently.

[Runs down to table and sets a basket of cups
there.

Margot. Ah ! fine doings, fine doings when
my old bones must go a trudging while you lie
a-bed, or gossip.

Grumbling.

Jacqueline. I only waited to see if the byre
were swept, mother.

Margot. And hinder Blaize finely in the
sweeping ? Go thy ways, go thy ways !

In mock anger.

[JACQUELINE comes behind and puts her arms
round MARGOT'S neck.

Jacqueline. Mother !

Caressingly.

Margot. The forward huzzy that can't wait
for a husband to get a right to make his mother
work . . . (JACQUELINE covers MARGOT'S lips
with her hand). Well, well, come, now thou art
here, lend a hand with the milk and fill the
glasses ; the Queen will be here before we are
ready.

*They set the pail
and cups on the
table.*

[JACQUELINE takes little cups one by one
kneeling R. of table. MARGOT carefully
fills them and sets them ready on the
table.

THE QUEEN'S JEST.

*Slowly as she tilts
pail.*

Margot. A fine morning for her merry shepherding.

Looks over to R.

Jacqueline. But a wild night, mother, ill for the folk who lie in the fields: even here in the Queen's Pleasaunce . . . it was that Blaize stayed to tell me.

Margot. What then?

*Turning well as she
kneels.*

Jacqueline. The great oak yonder (*points R.*), the Dauphin's tree, has crashed through the wall and made a gap three horsemen might well ride through.

Margot. Saints preserve us! (*lets pail fall back and clasps her hands in horror*).

Lightly.

Jacqueline. Why, mother, 'tis no such great matter, there are plenty more trees.

Goes on pouring.

Margot. But the Dauphin's oak! that with its fall marks ill to the son of the King whenever it falls! And the Queen so full of signs and wonders that if a candle quenches she will nigh weep her eyes out! That to-day she should choose to begin her madcap shepherding again. Well! well!

[*Enter DES GRIEUX on terrace; he comes down listening.*]

Filling last cup.

Jacqueline. Well, if I were a Queen, it would take more than a candle to fright me, mother! (*rises and stretches comfortably*).

Margot. They that sit high fear a fall most, child.

DES GRIEUX comes down steps.

THE QUEEN'S JEST.

5

Des Grioux. And those that sit low were best talk of things they can fathom, Mother Margot.

Smiling quietly

[MARGOT starts and turns round sharply.

[She and JACQUELINE begin nervously curt-seying.

Margot. Nay, your Excellency knows I meant nought amiss.

Deprecatingly.

[DES GRIEUX crosses and sits L. chair furthest from fountain.

Des Grioux. But it is the ear it reaches gives poison to a jest, good Mother, and those that love the Queen wag no idle tongues over her weakness in these times.

Emphasizing with finger; his manner is kindly and half cynical.

[MARGOT and JACQUELINE have moved R. Now JACQUELINE returns and pours out a cup of milk which she hands to DES GRIEUX, kneeling L.

Thank you, my girl.

MARGOT looking up R. anxiously.

Margot. Jacqueline! Come! The Queen will be here.

Fussily backing up stage.

Des Grioux. Nay, not for a while, Mother—not for a while—I can finish my draught first.

Smiling to himself.

Margot. But your Excellency comes but before her from the “lever.”

Inquisitively.

Des Grioux. Not to-day.

Amused.

Margot. Never before have I known your Excellency fail . . . Is your Excellency . . . suffering?

Most eagerly. With growing curiosity.

THE QUEEN'S JEST.

Very firmly.

Des Grioux. Nothing.

Margot. (*Embarrassed*) Nothing ?

Same tone.

Des Grioux. (*Amused at her insistence*) Nothing !

[*MARGOT* rather offended turns to walk off L. with *JACQUELINE*, shaking her head and muttering to herself.

Margot stops and turns.

Margot simpers and apologises for her curiosity.

Des Grioux. Her tongue will tell the tale more truly than most ; Mother Margot. Your ears are itching for my meaning, eh . . . ? Well, give me another cup of milk and you shall hear !

[*MARGOT* fussily signs to *JACQUELINE*, who obeys and remains kneeling beside *DES GRIEUX*.

[*MARGOT* stands expectant. *JACQUELINE* kneels watching. *DES GRIEUX* drinks very slowly, sets the cup down, wipes his lips with a laced handkerchief, crosses his knees, and looking fixedly at *MARGOT* says very seriously :

Des Grioux. Last night between re-re-supper and bed-time her Majesty did yawn three times !

[*A pause.* The two look at one another and at *DES GRIEUX* in bewilderment.

Jacqueline. (*Innocently*) Belike—she was tired, Excellency.

Patting her shoulder.

Des Grioux. It has occurred to me as not unlikely, *Jacqueline*. But, those that should have cured her weariness were not able for their task, and as the great doors were opened for her Majesty's "coucher" she turned back towards the bowing lines and spoke thus : "Gentlemen,

With clean cut sarcasm.



DES GRIEUX.

methinks your wits are at the wars with His Majesty, and would you but follow them thither it would please me well. But be that as it may; I care not for your presence without them, so farewell till they return. For these three days my ladies and I will be alone. We may while away the time less heavily in your absence." With that she left us; the fine fellows fingering their curls and sword hilts and feeling mighty foolish as the whole bevy of her ladies swept after her with many a mocking curtsey of farewell. Now this morning when they that had the "entrée" came to her "lever" at her doors stood the Marquise de Bréau and the Comtesse d'Hautepoule and held the silver wands across to keep us all out.

[JACQUELINE *picks up cup and goes away*
R. *with it.*

Margot. The mad wench! Heaven pardon me! Her Majesty I *should* say; but even so, she would weary of us all as a child and toss her ball to the monkey and her comfits to the birds (*laughing*).

DES GRIEUX *has grown grave.*

Des Grieux. Dame Margot, you love the Queen well?

Margot. Love the child I held to my heart a little blue eyed babe, and saw play when her pretty head wore no heavier crown than a wreath of wild flowers? Ah! Excellency.

Des Grieux. What will folk say, think you, of this mad prank of hers?

Margot begins to laugh in dumb show.

Works up to a little climax.

Horrified at her own boldness.

With meaning.

Indignantly.

Almost tearfully.

Watching her keenly.

THE QUEEN'S JEST.

Embarrassed.

Margot. Ah, Excellency—how should I know? What evil *can* they say?

Bitterly.

Des Grieux. The Queen's rooms are too small, Margot, and those that are without speak ever evil of those that are within. There will not be wanting tongues to tell of reasons for this madcap deed. Nay, not angry, Margot, but you and I, let us tell the tale as it befell to all who may ask of us . . . Now go, for I hear the voices and the laughter of her ladies.

*Margot mutters indignantly.**Any number of ladies may be introduced in this group.*

[MARGOT and JACQUELINE hurry off L. DES GRIEUX moves after them but keeps well down, while a sound of laughter and talking grows louder. R. U. E. a PAGE runs across the stage R. to L., hunted by MADELEINE de NEUFVILLE, the MARQUISE de BREAU, and the COMTESSE d'HAUTEPOULE; they are laughing and pelting him with rose leaves.

[He runs down steps and dodges L. and then hides behind table R.

At top of steps calling on the other ladies.

Madeleine. Victory! victory! He flies before us.

[She hunts him to table. At the top of steps the MARQUISE and the COMTESSE hold the silver wands and laughingly cross and recross them, while MADELEINE lectures the PAGE R., and other ladies group themselves L. and R.

Moving back her wand.

De Breau. Higher.

Moving forward wand.

Comtesse d'Hautepoule. Lower.

De Breau. Nay, they meet here (*pulling the wand to her*).

Comtesse d'Hautepoule. No, here. (*Pushing away wand.*)

[*They come down steps. Two ladies go to fountain.*]

De Breau. See, I hold my fan so; and the wand so! What an air! (*Assuming attitude. All laugh and applaud.*)

Comtesse d'Hautepoule. Bravo! Bravo! (*They both laugh.*) A curtesy, see! (*Holds wand and curtseys; as she does so the wand slips and she staggers and almost falls. All laugh.*)

De Breau. Admirable! encore! encore! (*She curtseys too.*)

(*Music.*)

[*MADELEINE, who has been threatening the PAGE with further punishments and pelting him up R., comes R.C.*]

Madeleine. Ladies, the Queen.

[*PAGE runs up R.U.E. and returns bowing back before QUEEN. MADELINE curtseys deeply. The two LADIES holding their wands follow suit, leaving room for the QUEEN to pass between them.*]

[*Enter the QUEEN R.U.E., her hand resting on the arm of the PRINCESSE DE BAIN-VILLIERS, her Mistress of the Robes. As she passes between the wands DES GRIEUX comes forward L. and bows. Two*

This entrance must be full of dainty stateliness. The grouping of the ladies as varied as possible and the colours carefully selected.

THE QUEEN'S JEST.

ATTENDANT LADIES range themselves near the table. The QUEEN at sight of DES GRIEUX stands a moment still C. Walks to end of music, pauses. DES GRIEUX waits.

A little sternly.

Queen. Did you not hear my commands, my lord? No man comes into the presence chamber to-day.

With mock humility.

Des Grieux. I grow somewhat deaf, may it please your Grace; yet hear I that in all sheep-folds the dog stays in when the wolves howl without.

Disdainfully.

Queen. And why not you a wolf?

Joining his fingers and holding hat under arm.

Des Grieux. Nay, your Majesty, my wits are with the rest at the wars, so stand I under your royal displeasure, yet these ten years I keep the door of your Highness' chamber. Hence am I wolf as the others, yet have I kept guard over the flock for my probation.

[The QUEEN laughs a little uneasily, shrugs her shoulders, and with a gesture of dismissal moves on to the table R. She sits attended by her LADIES, the PRINCESS facing her. They begin to drink milk. A little group moving and curtseying near the QUEEN. Then PAGE kneels R. of the QUEEN and begins in dumb show telling her the story of the Tree.

He must learn the words, page 4, and speak them in dumb show.

[MADELEINE comes down to DES GRIEUX. Looks at him standing on tip-toe.

Abruptly.

Madeleine. Why did you stay?

THE QUEEN'S JEST.

II

Des Grioux. Nay, fair lady, your sharp wits would be too keen for my blunt reasons !

Indulgently.

Madeleine. Then take my sharp wit's thanks for a loyal deed ! seeing the city stands but nine miles away, and there lack not evil tongues among those who hate her to turn our royal mistress' fancy to their own base meanings.

Shrewdly, patting his arm.

[*DES GRIEUX looks amused at her quickness. She runs laughing to the QUEEN. DES GRIEUX goes up L. and begins in dumb-show to teach the LADIES how to hold their wands. MADELEINE crosses to the QUEEN. The PRINCESS is looking towards the tree, and as MADELEINE comes near, the QUEEN rises much agitated.*

Queen. 'Tis pity for a fine tree.

Wringing her hands softly.

Madeleine. It has wrecked your Majesty's old arbour. See !

Trying to distract her attention.

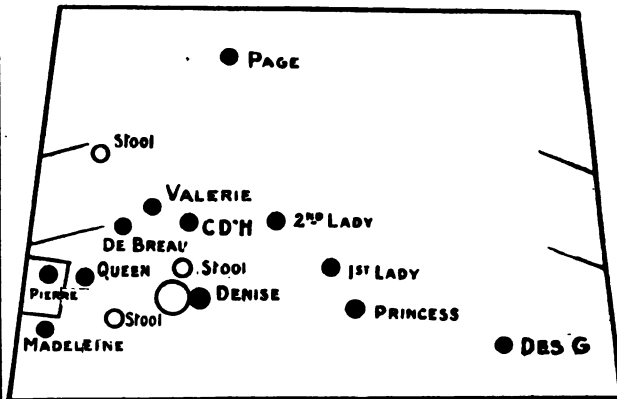
[*The QUEEN crosses to the arbour with MADELEINE ; as they draw near MADELEINE sees PIERRE and starts back with a little cry, " Oh ! " All draw near and look. Cries of " Oh ! look ! A child ! See, what is it ! " from all the ladies as they crowd R.*

A long series of exclamations and much movement.

A bonnie lad ! (*kneels beside arbour*).

[*The PAGE runs up behind the balustrade and jumps up and down to see better.*

THE QUEEN'S JEST.



Contemptuously.

Princesse de Bainvilliers. Fast asleep, by my faith.

Comtesse d'Hautepoule. Poor little animal ! These vulgar folk are not so ill to look on at times !

Lifts her wand as if to poke him.

Valerie. Don't hurt him (*stops her*).

Smiling.

Queen. We cannot be rid of them all, ladies ! Has not this shepherd lad come now we have sent away his betters ?

[*PAGE runs down and kneels by tree R. of arbour.*

Princesse de Bainvilliers. (*Very, crushingly.*) He is easier sent away, your Grace.

Madeleine. (*Watching the QUEEN's face as she kneels R.*) But it seems a pity to wake him.

[*The QUEEN after a moment signs to them all*

to draw back and beckons DES GRIEUX forward.

Queen. What was the story you read us last night, my Lord ?

Des Grieux. Of the taming of her they call Katharine the Shrew, your Grace ?

Smiling.

Queen. Nay, but another of the barbarians over whom you and M. de Voltaire quarrel—the Englishman ?

Humorously.

Des Grieux. (Smiling.) It was but the same tale your Majesty.

Queen. And it said ?

Des Grieux. How a certain poor Christopher was overcome with wine, and waking, found himself no more a tinker, but a lord.

Shaking his head and laughing.

Queen. (Suddenly alarmed. Drawing back and lifting up her dress.) Is he ?

[All LADIES exclaim, draw back and lift dresses.

Des Grieux. (Very gravely.) I fear not, your Majesty.

Queen. (Turns away) It would have been amusing.

Already tired of the idea.

Madeleine. (Comes forward eagerly) But surely your Majesty he is but a child and if your Grace willed

Queen. (A little bitterly) Ye have made fools of better men than he ; is that your meaning, Madeleine ?

[All LADIES laugh and tease MADELEINE, who hides her face in mock confusion.

Princess frowns and folds her hands.

THE QUEEN'S JEST.

A pause, the QUEEN watches, PIERRE.

Pause after question.

(To DES GRIEUX) They told him he was a great Lord, who in his madness had deemed himself a serf? (DES GRIEUX bows.) But we have no Page so small

Shyly, half frightened at her own daring.

Madeleine. There is his Highness the Dauphin.

[The PRINCESS, who has been growing more and more indignant, steps forward with an indignant exclamation. All others exclaim delightedly.

Delighted at having shocked Princess.

Princesse de Bainvilliers. Really, your Grace.

Queen. Thy wits are the nimblest here, child! Go, Des Grieux, the stranger we bring back with us is the Dauphin. All to your places, girls, but first

The Princess is told to stand aside as she can be no use. The Page is cuffed and sent flying away. Madeleine kneels in his place.

[DES GRIEUX bows and exit. The QUEEN goes from one to another and whispers directions, they take up places, laughing and bowing. The QUEEN goes R., kneels and wakes PIERRE, who sits up.

Oh, my son, my son, do you not know your mother even now?

Pierre sits up sharply, his feet stuck out straight in front of him.

[PIERRE stares at her and looks round as if he wondered to whom she could be speaking. The QUEEN wrings her hands and rises with a little cry of pain.

Try you, Madeleine. He may remember you.

[PIERRE turns to MADELEINE, pushes his cap down on his head, stares at his sabots.

Madeleine. My gracious lord, do you not remember your Highness's poor playfellow, Madeleine de Neufville ?

In mock pathos.

[*PIERRE, after staring hard at her for a minute, puts out a hand and takes hers.*

He recognises a friend.

All Ladies. (Eagerly) He remembers her. He remembers you !

Princess stands silent.

[*PIERRE stares round, takes off his cap and bows to all.*

Queen. Nay, but speak, my son ; tell us who we are.

Pierre. (Pointing his thumb at her) You are the Queen

Slowly.

All Ladies. His wits return. His Highness is cured ! See ! His wits return.

Giggling.

Queen. And yourself, my son. Ah ! tell us your name—have you remembered ?

Pierre. I am Pierre (*doubtfully*).

The LADIES choke with laughter.

Madeleine. Nay, but His Highness the Dauphin of France !

De Breau. Whom a long and terrible madness causes to forget himself.

Each one takes up the tale sharply.

Comtesse d'Hautepoule. And who fancies himself a wood-cutter's son.

Pierre. (Very gravely, pointing at her) No Charcoal-burner's.

As if correcting an important point.

All Ladies. (Bursting into laughter) His Highness is no better ! His Highness still dreams ! Alas ! What will restore His Highness !

Divide words among all of them.

Stepping R.

Princesse de Bainvilliers. (*Angrily to the QUEEN*) Your Majesty forgets the respect due to his Highness's name!

More serenely.

Queen. (*Facing her*) And you your place, Princess! (*A pause, the PRINCESS bows and draws back, all LADIES laugh. Turns sharply to her LADIES*) Be silent, girls; you will drive him mad in good sooth. (*To PIERRE*) Louis, you are our son; this day the Physician gave hope the fever of your brain which hath so long held you might abate; come, tell me the truth, do you know yourself and your true state once more?

His wonder and fright are too much for him.

Pierre. (*After thinking a moment*) I am very hungry, Queen; Blanchette and Gri-gri are lost and . . . Père Grospe will beat me! (*Cries.*)

Denise. Why it's crying. Look at it!

Moved to sudden pity.

Madeleine. (*Eagerly springs forward and puts her arm round PIERRE*) Your Grace, might not food perchance bring back his Highness's reason, seeing his fever is so far abated into calmness?

Puzzled.

Queen. Lead him in then, Madeleine, for indeed it is the hour of our fast breaking; come, Louis, and your servants shall care for the dress your Highness's madness hath disordered.

[*The PAGE has come back and now walks out backward, exaggeratedly bowing before PIERRE, R.U.E. Two LADIES stand aside to let them pass, with deep curtseys. The QUEEN turns to go and then stops, looking back. PRINCESS DE BAINVILLIERS comes near.*]

Queen. He really looked hungry; did you notice, Princess?

A little uncomfortable.

Princesse de Bainvilliers. Really, your Majesty, I am not versed in the looks of such creatures.

Indignantly.

First Lady. (Bored) Peasants are always hungry!

Comtesse d'Hautepoule. Near our home, your Majesty, they have even been known to eat nettles!

In the tone of one recounting a remarkable fact.

Queen. (Amused) Nettles?

All Ladies. Yes, yes, your Majesty, indeed! Yes, it is well known.

Queen. (Disgusted) Ugh! Why, I would sooner eat brown bread than that! *(All laugh)* But come, ladies, the Dauphin waits.

All. The Dauphin! The Dauphin!

Laughing and raising hands.

[MUSIC. *They go out laughing and shouting "the Dauphin."* PRINCESSE DE BAINVILLIERS, very much scandalised at the whole scene, is protesting to the QUEEN as they go. Exit R.U.E.]

Valerie. (Exit last) "Poor little lad."

Stops on the balustrade.

[Enter quickly MARGOT and JACQUELINE, L.U.E.]

[MARGOT presses forward, JACQUELINE keeps looking after LADIES.]

Margot. Quick, quick, child. Clear the cups away. So where is your basket?

THE QUEEN'S JEST.

Jacqueline. (Looking R. over her shoulder) Oh ! mother, did you see the little lad . . . he—

They get all the cups cleared away.

Very angrily.

Margot. Hold your tongue, child ! Did you hear what his Excellency had to say to you this morning ? I blushed for you !

Jacqueline. (Astonished) But, mother . . .

Hunting her off with jug and basket of cups.

Margot. Hush, not a word ! Off with you, off with you. Shoo ! shoo !

[*She hurries off JACQUELINE, turning several times to make sure, then creeps up herself after the Court, looks back to see that she is not noticed, and hurries off R.U.E., chuckling to herself.*]

SCENE II.

The same Scene some hours later.

MUSIC—*Enter R.U.E. LADIES, PAGES, MUSICIANS, SINGERS, and DANCERS. MADELEINE DE NEUFVILLE leads in PIERRE. The QUEEN enters with the PRINCESSE DE BAINVILLIERS, and sits C. on a chair a PAGE brings her. The MUSICIANS take up their position R.U.E. on Terrace. LADIES group, leaving plenty of space for dancers. PIERRE stands R.C. between QUEEN and MADELEINE.*

Queen. (To PIERRE) Monsieur my son, will your Highness hear some music since your mind is so happily amended ?



MARIE ANTOINETTE.

Pierre. If the lady will like it too, Queen
(pointing to MADELEINE).

All Ladies. (Laugh and point at MADELEINE,
who pretends to blush.)

Queen. A conquest, Madelon, and a true one !
What, shall we see thee a Shepherd lass yet ?
(All LADIES laugh.) Come, Louis, sit by my side
and hear how Shepherds woo in Arcady.

Clapping her hands.

Pierre. (Holding fast MADELEINE'S hand, sits
awkwardly at the QUEEN'S feet on a stool.)

[SONG, while the LADIES and PAGES dance a
stately dance.

IN ARCADY.

MUSIC, "Waxen lights are gleaming brightly."
(A. Moffat. Augener's).

Corydon and Phyllis sat

• By a fountain's crystal flow ;
Round them sported, sleek and fat,
Happy goats with hair of snow.

" Phyllis cruel, faithless, fair,
Pity now my heart's despair,
Love me, like me, let me go ! "
Corydon wooed Phyllis so.

Soon the roguish archer heard,
Saw the constant shepherd's pain,
Swift his golden arrow whirred
In her heart to kill disdain.

" Corydon, my fairest swain,
Give me back my heart again,
Like me, love me, bid me stay ! "
Corydon heard Phyllis say.

The dance should be something of minuet fashion, with the idea in its action that the Ladies are disdainful shepherdesses wooed by their swains, and then faithless swains wooed by their shepherdesses. A thoroughly conventional Watteau grouping can easily be arranged.

THE QUEEN'S JEST.

And the youth, to pity stirred,
Thought not of her former scorn,
Soothed with many a tender word
All the pain of Love's sharp thorn.

Corydon and Phyllis fond,
Hymen's golden sacred bond,
Loved they, liked they, would they go,
Held them fast for evermo'e.

[During the song and dance PIERRE is served
by MADELEINE and LADIES. He eats
and drinks, but gradually grows impatient.
As song ends he jumps up, and hurries
forward, crying out.

*This movement
must not come too
soon after the dance
has ended.*

Rather thickly.

Pierre. But that is all wrong. The goats
would never follow such a song as that !

Impatiently.

Ladies. The little boor ! Such lovely words !
And Lulli's music ! Was ever such impudence ?

The DANCERS scatter.

Amused.

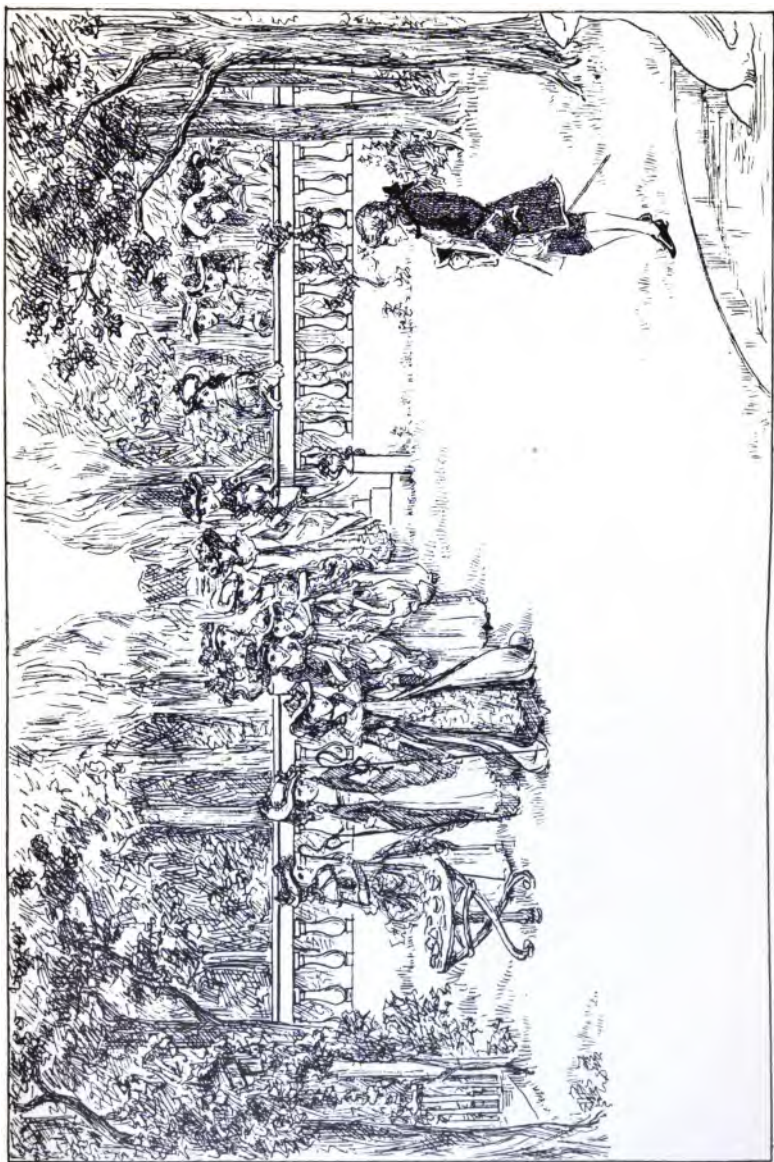
Queen. What is wrong, my son ?

*He is now explain-
ing to these fine folk
something he
thoroughly under-
stands.*

Pierre. (Hurriedly) The song, the words and
all, *Queen.* See, it must go slowly, slowly, as the
goats feed and their bells strike in time with it
here and there. Slowly, slowly, as they lift their
heads from the grass. Then Corydon and Phyllis !
We have no such names with us among the
shepherd folk ! And the silly words that chop
and change every moment ! No, that is no
shepherd's song. (*Laughs a little unsteadily.*)

Queen. (A little offended) Then will your wisdom
sing us one, *Monsieur ?*

[*She rises and crosses L., sitting by the fountain.*



QUEEN AND DES GRIEUX.

THE QUEEN'S JEST.

21

DES GRIEUX *beside her.* All LADIES
group I.

Pierre. (Steps out a little R., looks round, makes
an awkward bow and begins):

SONG *unaccompanied.* See page 32 for tune.

Ah-ri! Ah-ri! The sun is high,
The still hawk hangs in yonder sky. No wealth
have I,
No bread to buy.
Ah-ri! Ah-ri! The goatherd's cry!
Ah-ri! Ah-ri! Ye beasts of ill!
Foul fall your feet that wander still,
My lass and I would kiss our fill. Ah-ri! Ah-ri!
Be still, be still.
Ah-ri! Ah-ri! The grave comes soon,
Hand seeketh hand beneath the moon;
So soon at rest, so soon forgot,
Ah-ri! Ah-ri! Life matters not.

[*As he finishes he begins to sob, and at last
hides his face, crying, and MADELEINE
runs to him and comforts him. VALERIE
watches her. The other LADIES indicate
disgust.*

Toinon! I want Toinon!

Denise. Why, it's crying again!

Queen. (Quickly) Des Grieux, what is it?
What does it mean?

Des Grieux. Sorrow that has grown beyond
grieving into dull endurance, your Grace. He
was far from your silks and laces, on the green
slopes of Courtr , in his ears the low dull clank of
the goat bells, and the munching of the restless

*He begins quite
cheerfully, but grows
more and more
miserable as he goes
on, and in the last
verse the tune falters
and falters and ends
in a burst of tears.*

Pointing.

Much troubled.

*Bending over her
very gently.*

*Dreamily; the Queen
listens wonderingly.*

THE QUEEN'S JEST.

muzzles, with the click of Toinon's wooden pins, perhaps, as she knitted her rough wool kirtle. Ah-ri, ah-ri, the goatherd's cry !

Very high and shrill.

Toinon. (Her voice is heard outside crying)
Ah-ri ! Ah-ri !

PIERRE rises, MADELEINE draws back R.

All Ladies. There it is again ! There it is again ! Listen ! where !

[TOINON runs in along Terrace and stands at top of steps.

Sobbing.

Toinon. Ah-ri ! Ah-ri ! Pierre ! Pierre !

Pierre. (He has been crying silently while MADELEINE tries to comfort him. Now he springs up and runs C.)

Toinon ! Toinon !

Toinon. (Waving him back) No, no, that is not Pierre ; it is a young lord. *(Runs to him)* Pierre, Pierre, what have they done to you ?

[The two stand rubbing and comforting one another like two little lost animals.

Scornfully.

Princesse de Bainvilliers. These creatures are mere animals.

Turning away.

Denise. Disgusting.

Fanning herself.

First Lady. Really this last whim of the Queen's is getting serious.

Staring through eyeglasses.

Second Lady. She is frightful, positively frightful.

All Ladies. Look at her feet ! Look at the mud ! Look. Horrible.



PIERRE.



Pierre. (To *Toinon*) Do not cry, dear, I was frightened too at first, but they are good and kind ; when they have played their jest they will send me home, and—(suddenly) are Gri-gri and Blanchette back ? (with great anxiety).

Who has gradually recovered himself and calmed down.

Toinon. To-day ; . . . thy father and mine came to look for thee and they said . . . they said in the old King's time . . . they killed little children here . . . (in horror) but while they spoke to the guard I heard thy song . . . and I ran . . . thy call . . . ah, they have not hurt thee !

Nodding and still clinging to him. She cries once more.

Queen. (She has been watching the children and DES GRIEUX has been speaking to her earnestly ; she rises and signs to her LADIES to be quiet) Pierre, come here.

Pierre. (Holding TOINON'S hand fast, crosses, and both kneel in front of the QUEEN, plumping down awkwardly on both knees. PIERRE nearest audience. LADIES draw back a little.)

Queen. Pierre, you will not be my son ? (He looks at her gravely, but does not answer.) At the Charcoal-burner's, are they good to you ?

This is part of the foolish talk of great folk and needs no answer.

Pierre. Good ? I—do—not—know, Queen.

He has never thought.

Queen. Do they give you enough to eat ?

Trying to find something he will understand.

Pierre. (Laughing) Enough ? Who has ever enough to eat ? But what we have we share.

Such an absurd idea.

Queen. (Horried) And your father ?

Pierre. (Simply) Ah ! yes, he is good, Queen ; but he will die soon. He and my brother went to drain the marsh for our new Seigneur's pleasure,

This is quite an ordinary state of things and is told quite prosaically.

the black pools. My brother died, and soon my father will die too.

Shuts her eyes a moment in horror.

Queen. (After a pause) And thy master ?

Pierre. (Wiggles) It is not easy to work, and for Toinon's sake he lets me work ; the goats are wild enough ; they are foolish beasts, and then . . . (He finishes by rubbing his shoulders with an expressive gesture.)

Queen. (Turning to TOINON) You love this little lad ?

Toinon. (Indignantly) Queen, he is my brother.

Queen. (Laughing) Nay, not quite.

All Ladies. (Laugh and exclaim.)

Toinon. (Frightened) Yes, yes, always.

Explaining very slowly.

Queen. See, leave him here, and he shall be my Page, and fare well and live delicately every day ; but if you take him away he must go hungry and be beaten.

Very timidly.

Toinon. (Looks anxiously from one to the other and lets go PIERRE'S hand) Whatever is best for Pierre.

Slowly.

Pierre. (After a pause, rising) It is best for me to be with thee.

[He tucks TOINON'S arm under his, makes an awkward bow to the QUEEN, and they move away R. by 2nd wing entrance, their heads close together, talking confidentially and forgetting all the grand folk.

[Enter PAGE running R.U.E., he kneels at the QUEEN'S feet.

Page. (*Breathlessly*) Your Majesty, a courier from the King. He rides through the gates of the town; at the mere sound of his coming the Siege of Arras was ended, and crowned with the laurels of victory, his Highness hastens to lay his sword at your feet. (*He presents a folded paper*).

Queen. (*Bewildered*) The King so soon? (*She stands at first as if lost in thought. DES GRIEUX leans over to the QUEEN and seems to speak earnestly, looking after the Children.*)

He continues during following Scene.

[*All LADIES crowd round the PAGE questioning him.*

Princesse de Bainvilliers. (*Sweeping out first L. of PAGE*) What prodigies of valour his Majesty must have performed!

Madeleine. (*R. of PAGE*) Who come with him, tell us, tell us, quickly! The Comte de Vilray?

[*Pulls PAGE R.*

Page. Yah.

Grimacing.

Comtesse d'Hautepoule. My cousin de Breuil?

Behind him.

[*Pulling PAGE back.*

Page. Boo!

Grimacing.

De Breau. (*L. of PAGE*) The first Lieutenant of the Guards?

[*Pulling him L.*

Page. Hee!

Turning on him.

First Lady. The Captain of the Musketeers?

[*Pulling him another way.*

Page. Haw!

Turning on her.

Second Lady. Little Marsac, the Cadet of Gascony?

[*Pulling him away.*

THE QUEEN'S JEST.

Turning on her.

*Sweeping in and
tearing Page away
R.*

*Interrupting
smartly.*

*Wearily. Down L.
with Des G.*

*She is weary of the
jest which has
turned to such poor
earnest.*

Earnestly.

*Nothing ever goes
as she wishes it.*

*Des Grieux goes up
last to R. wing.*

Page. Grrrrr!

Princesse de Bainvilliers. For shame, ladies !
In her Majesty's presence ! (*To PAGE*) Has the
Sieur Philippe de . . . Com—

All Ladies. For shame, Princess ! In her
Majesty's presence !

[*The PAGE runs out, laughing and stopping
his ears. The LADIES crowd up R.
mocking the PRINCESS, who protests they
are quite mistaken.*

Queen. See it so determined, Des Grieux. He
can grow wise in the wood-craft, and live to be a
ranger. Let me hear no more of it ; (*impatiently*)
then for once you will be done with your preach-
ing, and the boy will not be the worse. (*Turns as
if to go ; looks back at him*) Toinon, they call her ?
Well, my rival is not too beautiful ; but a peasant
lad . . . ! No doubt she will do well enough,
and her dowry may be none the smaller for this
day's work, when the old brute, her father, is
dead !

Des Grieux. Or lives to bless the Queen's jest,
Madame.

Queen. (*With a gesture of impatience moves up
and passes out.*)

The LADIES all follow her.

MUSIC. A more formal exit than before.

MARGOT creeps in L., coughing and beckoning.

Margot. (*Creeping near*) Ahem ! Ahem !
Excellency.

Des Grioux. (With back to audience, looking round over L. shoulder) Well ?

Margot. Oh ! Excellency, the little lad, what has come to him ?

Tremulously, her hands clasped.

Des Grioux. No harm, Mother Margot ; he is gone most likely to pay for his frolic.

Turning lightly.

Margot. His frolic, indeed ! The poor lad, most likely hers ! It was cruel of her, cruel ! (clasping and unclasping her hands).

Des Grioux. Will he think so when he finds himself one of Her Majesty's forest guards, good mother ? Or when the day comes to take Toinon's dowry out of the hiding hole in the thatch, and he finds the Queen's gold pieces there, eh ?

More earnestly.

Margot. Ah, no, in that case, Excellency But that dreadful old man is waiting for him ; and though the goats are found, it is too good a chance to lose for a beating, Excellency.

Most apologetic.

Humorously.

Des Grioux. (Turning up R.) Then will I hasten to the rescue, Dame, and (pausing) if I send the boy to you will there be a corner in the byre where he can sleep till we find him better quarters ?

Looking back.

Margot. (Delighted) The warmest there is, Excellency, and Heaven bless your kind heart.

Des Grioux. (Pausing on steps) Nay, the Queen's, Margot, the Queen's. (MARGOT curtsseys.)

Raising his hat.

[Exit R.U.E.]

Margot. (Exit calling for JACQUELINE L.)

Waits a moment.

[Enter slowly R. wing PIERRE and TOINON ; she is crying and PIERRE is trying to

He has had his beating.

THE QUEEN'S JEST.

comfort her, rubbing his own back at the same time.

Sobbing.

Toinon. Pierre, Pierre ! Did he hurt thee ?

Gulping.

Pierre. Not—not so much as usual, Toinon ; his hand must have been tired.

Sits R. on stool.

Wringing her hands.

Toinon. And if it had not been for me the Queen would have kept thee here ! And then he would never have beaten thee any more !

Reflecting.

Pierre. Ay, but it could not be. Look you, Toinon, a squirrel could not live in a cage (*a pause ; then earnestly*) The food is not nearly so good as you would think.

Very much astonished.

Toinon. No ?

Emphatically.

Pierre. No—hot spiced things—that burn one's tongue.

[Enter MARGOT with a cup of goat's milk and a slice of brown bread L.]

Cackling.

He almost snatches the cup from her hand and drinks like a wild creature, never taking his eyes off her.

Margot. I warrant this would not come much amiss, eh ? (*PIERRE stands up and stares at her*) Come your ways with me to the byre, there's plenty of good straw for the asking, and work for a bonnie lad like you ; better than goat hunting ! Come ! (*She goes off L., PIERRE follows.*)

Pierre. (*Turning back to TOINON*) Toinon !

Forlornly.

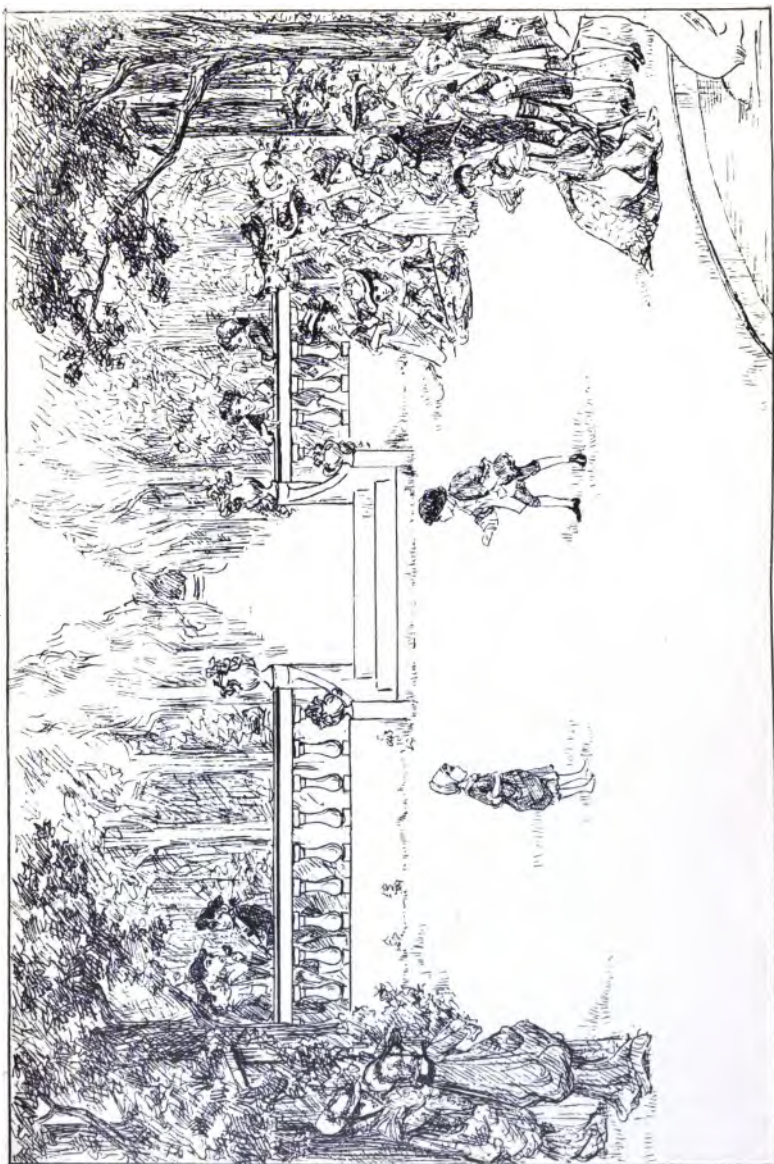
Toinon. Yes, Pierre.

With great importance.

Pierre. I shall not let him beat me any more. It is not fitting.

Clasping her hands.

Toinon. Oh, Pierre !



TOINON AND PIERRE.

Pierre. No. I grow tall, and besides all things must have an end. Come! (*He walks off L., puffed up with importance.*)

Toinon. Oh! Pierre!

[*Exit L.*

[*Enter PRINCESSE DE BAINVILLIERS and two LADIES R.U.E.*

Princesse de Bainvilliers. (*Talking and exclaiming loudly*) It is scandalous, shameful!

Ladies. But tell us, tell us, what did she say?

They argue and exclaim to front of stage.

Princesse de Bainvilliers. No sooner was the King risen from greeting her Majesty, scarcely had he begun to tell her of his prowess, when she stayed him to ask: "Were I a peasant maid, sire, would you leave even a crown for my sake."

Ladies. Well, and he? And he? Tell us.

Enter MADELEINE R.U.E., stands at steps.

Princesse de Bainvilliers. Nay, but what could his Majesty as a gallant man say? He sang of Corydon and Phyllis, and then gravely rebuked her Majesty in these words: "Yet can I not readily lend my thoughts to so sacrilegious a fancy as to picture her Majesty in the form of one of those half bestial creatures we call peasants."

Ladies. Oh! Oh!

MADELEINE, coming down C.

Madeleine. Princess, her Majesty awaits you with the King and his new made General, the Sieur Philippe de—

Stands quite still a moment, then trots after him bleating.

Continued for some time.

Divide lines.

Very pompously.

Eagerly.

In a superior manner.

Both ladies look at one another and laugh.

Much impressed.

Princess turns and curtsies.

Princesse de Bainvilliers. (*Running up*) Oh !
Mademoiselle ! I fly ! I fly !

[*Exit R.U.E.*

[*One Lady follows her.* COMTESSE D'HAUTE-
POULE stays. She and MADELEINE
laugh.

*Her arm round
Madeleine.*

Comtesse d'Hautepoule. Did you hear the tale
of the Queen's asking ?

*Playing with a
flower.*

Madeleine. I heard.

Looking at her.

Comtesse d'Hautepoule. Did you not think it
strange ?

Laughing quietly.

Madeleine. Nay, seeing that I had but asked
the same question myself.

Much astonished.

Comtesse d'Hautepoule. Of the King ?

Still looking away.

Madeleine. (*Shakes her head laughing.*)

*Catching up her
laughter.*

Comtesse d'Hautepoule. Ah of
a certain young gentleman, with laughing eyes
and bright brown curls that

*Covering mouth with
her hand.*

Madeleine. Ssh ! Ssh ! (*Looks round.*)

Freeing herself.

Comtesse d'Hautepoule. Well, and his answer.
Did he too sing of (*sarcastically*) Corydon and
Phyllis ?

*With a little
grimace.*

Madeleine. (*Shakes her head laughing ; runs
to see if anyone is near, then leads COMTESSE
D'HAUTEPOULE down R.*) If you were a peasant
maid, dear, my sweet, were you any less my
Queen ?

[COMTESSE in dumb show asks, "Did he
really?" MADELINE nods and laughs;
they kiss."

Comtesse d'Hautepoule. From which I learn two things.

Madeleine. Well, what ?

Absently.

Comtesse d'Hautepoule. Was it not thus you paid him ? (*kisses her.* *MADELEINE hushes her again sharply*) And for some reasons is it well to be a Queen with so loyal a gentleman as the King for husband ?

More seriously.

[*MADELEINE sighs and shrugs her shoulders, they both look at one another, then laugh. Voices are heard outside, with singing and laughing.* MUSIC.

Madeleine. Come : the Queen ; she is going in.

Gravely.

[*They go to the top of the steps ; the QUEEN and her LADIES pass right across Terrace from R. to L. and exit. MADELEINE and COMTESSE D'HAUTEPOULE curtsy and join the procession at their proper place.*

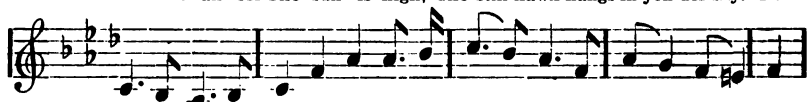
CURTAIN.

PIERRE'S SONG.

(See page 21.)



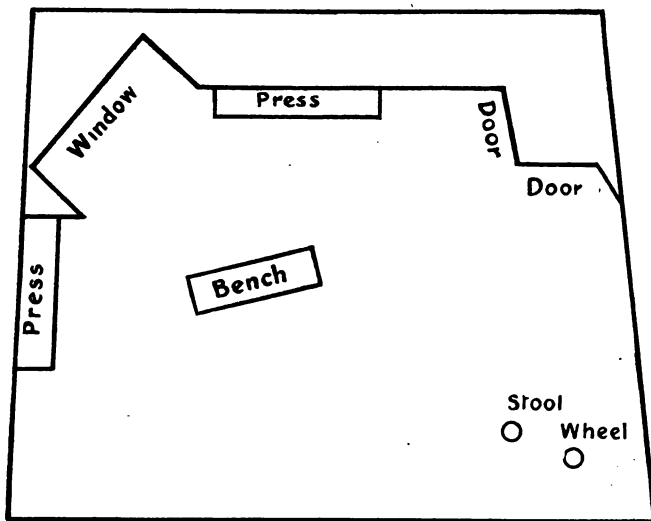
Ah - rri ah - rri The sun is high, The still hawk hangs in yon-der sky. No



wealth have I, No bread to buy, Ah - rri ah - rri the goat herd's cry.

"LOVE LAUGHS AT THE LOCKSMITH."





“LOVE LAUGHS AT THE LOCKSMITH.”

SCENE—*A Turret Room next the Secret Chamber of Keystone Farm.*

DATE—*October, 1657.*

DAMARIS LOCKYER, *Wife of a Puritan Yeoman.*

LADY SYBIL LOWELL, *a Royalist.*

Damaris. (Looking from window R.U.E. waves her hand) Farewell, dear heart—ride swift and strong! Farewell! Might one not deem the good

Looking after rider.

*Faces audience,
moves down.*

*Goes to bench and
touches pile of linen.*

*Looking at secret
door L.*

steed knew what weight he carrieth. It is even as good Master Bare of Grace read in his exhortation last night, "He devoureth the ground in his swiftness." (*Turns back to window then moves hastily away.*) Nay, for shame, Damaris Lockyer, to stand thus idly at thy casement when store of house-wifery waiteth these idle hands and so heavy a charge lieth on thy conscience. (*Takes key from seat, crosses left.*) First for the great key; methinks my mind will be easier if the lid of the oak press be shut on it. (*Goes to press and stands a moment holding up key.*) Cunning were the locksmith could unbar this mighty lock or roll back the bolts thereof. (*Shuts away key.*) Keystone farm is no fortalice, yet Sir Jasper Cardew lieth therein as safe this night as in Worcester jail, whither his steps are like enough to wend as soon as an escort may attend him there.

Song without.

[*This song is supposed to begin under window R. and pass across under stage ending in entrance L.*]

Lady Sybil.

"Who? My wife Gertrude that's honest and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, nay,"
"I've better counsellors, what counsel, they?
Boot, saddle, to horse and away."*

Damaris. (*Going up R.*) Nay, what portendeth so wanton a carolling in our sober house. (*Crosses to window, looks out and draws back hastily.* During this speech SYBIL is heard calling

*Damaris speaks
before the song is
ended.*

* Robert Browning's Cavalier Songs.

DAMARIS.) Now what mischance bringeth her here. Surely to rebuke my idle confidence is she come. It were ill she knew of Sir Jasper's prisoning here since her father is at heart King's man, and were like enough to come hurtling down at the head of a rescue, ay and prevail therein, seeing we be but two feeble women and a couple of half-witted hinds to repel him. Would she were safe gone! yet to hide from her—Nay 'tis too late—she is here.

Call without.

Call.

Call.

Call close to door.

Enter SYBIL, running.

Lady Sybil. Why, Damaris! by my fay, this is ungentle of thee! here run I seeking thee high and low with so full a budget of tale bearing to gossip in thy lenient ear and thou must needs withdraw thee to the turret chamber till I am all breathless with my race to win to thee. Come, sweet rogue, pay forfeit (*kissing her on both cheeks*), and were I but a plumed gallant from Whitehall thy crop-eared lord should rue the day he left thee to thine own protection.

At door, panting a little.

Catching Damaris by shoulders. With a little flourish.

Damaris. (Reproachfully) Sybil!

Lady Sybil. (Lightly) Nay, pardon, dear maid, a mad lass that can scarce lay bridle to her tongue, but must cry "haro" on all the world to tell of her joy and gladness (*draws DAMARIS over to the settle*). Come, sweet little mother Damaris, lay aside thy Puritan airs and fashions, and be we two maids together again, as in days far agone when I was ever the wayward wanton and thou the wise. Or ever stern George Lockyer won thee to lay by thy pretty vanities for love of his beetle-brows. (*DAMARIS covers her mouth, laughing.*)

A little impatient.

More teasingly.

*They sit holding
Hands.
Gravely.*

Lady Sybil. Nay, now down on the oaken settle, and unbend thy looks (*sit*). I speak no ill of him thou lovest—do I not know how well ! So well he hath driven poor madcap Sybil out of thy heart and thy love.

LADY SYBIL, head on DAMARIS'S shoulder.

Damaris. (Tenderly) Dear Sybil, neither from heart nor love ! Seemeth it not as yesterday we sat so together lovingly, as young maids use, to tell one another of childish sorrow or gladness.

Lady Sybil. (Sitting up) Ay, even so ; on the day I found the squirrel's granary and

Damaris. (Laughing) And fair broke thy shin in the climbing to it !

Mockingly.

Lady Sybil. And sought thee out for comfort ! Ay, or later when in her turn sweet mother Damaris came all aglow to tell me of George Lockyer's wooing, and his oaths of undying love for all he was a Puritan, and the kisses

*Damaris hushing
her.*

Damaris. Peace, mad wench, what squirrel's hoard comest thou to tell me of to-day ?

*Lady Sybil playing
with Damaris's
hand.*

Lady Sybil. Nay, 'twere nearer the other case, sweeting.

Damaris. (Trying to see her face) Why, Sybil, not ?

*Lady Sybil drawing
up sharply with
mock offence.*

Lady Sybil. Am I then so ill to look upon that mistress Damaris must have all the love tale to herself !

*More seriously
troubled.*

Damaris. (Very earnestly) Dear heart, to me thou art fair as the young hinds and thine eyes are soft as doves' eyes—yet—of a surety the

times are troublous and this lover of thine—if lover it be

Lady Sybil. (Springing to her feet) A lover ! A lover ! Damaris, gallant and gay, yet true as the steel at his side ; humble and brave and gracious ; no boaster but keen in his King's good quarrel, loving me, yet loving honour more ! *(Throwing her arms round Damaris)* Ah, Damaris, little mother Damaris, there is no end to the tale I could tell thee of his dear delightfulness.

All this speech must go with quick saving and not over pointedly.

Damaris. (A little anxiously) It hath not taken thee long to learn so long a tale, dear heart !

Lady Sybil. (Gravely) Ah, longer than thou doubttest dear ! Six weary months of conning and reconning looks and words ; six weary months of weeping night by night over one foolish token ! and no word to cheer me nor no thought I should see him 'ere again.

Sits at Damaris's feet.

Damaris. (Holding her) My sweet, but why no word to me in all this while ?

Lady Sybil. (Rises, moves L.) What hath a young maid to tell when her love hath told her naught ? Looks, aye ! and sweet words, but the gay gallants of Whitehall give them to every buxom ale wench they meet, and I was but a country maid new come to Oxford. How could I be sure ? . . . But last night *(kneels by Damaris)*, ah dear, for his sake even now I must not tell thee all. . . . In danger to his own life he sought me out here, and spoke the words he hath longed to speak erewhile but doubted. . . Now when he rode *(rises, looks R.)*, it may be to his death . . . yet, no, I must

Half defiantly.

With a touch of self mockery.

Glancing at window. Crosses R. and back, ending with her arms resting on Damaris's knees and her face hidden.

not think of that ! He came and told me his tale, and with it all the glow and glory of the June roses went into my heart once more !

Passionately moved.

Damaris. Dear child ! dear Sybil ! may they never fade for thee. Yet, alas, how may that be true of any earth-born happiness ! Though methinks if there be any worldly joy may dwell unfaded in the Heavenly City where they neither marry nor are given in marriage it were this—the first joy of love avowed in man and maid. And, dear, I can but joy it comes so soon to that wayward heart of thine !

Looking out over audience.

Turning again to Sybil.

Lady Sybil. (Very gravely looking up at her) So soon, and so truly dear that not even the shadow of death athwart it can make its sunlight dim.

The word calls back present things.

Damaris. Of death. . . He is King's man, then, this lover of thine. [Rises.

In a tone of passionate loyalty. They stand for a moment looking at each other almost defiantly, then move apart, Damaris L.

Lady Sybil. King's man—(crossing to window) Ah, Damaris, see, the lengthening shade tells the hour of his danger is over . . . thou art here alone ? . . . Thy husband ?

[Looking from window.

Looking at door L.

Damaris. (Slowly) He is abroad on urgent business.

Still looking at window.

Lady Sybil. And thou—thou would'st never betray my Jasper.

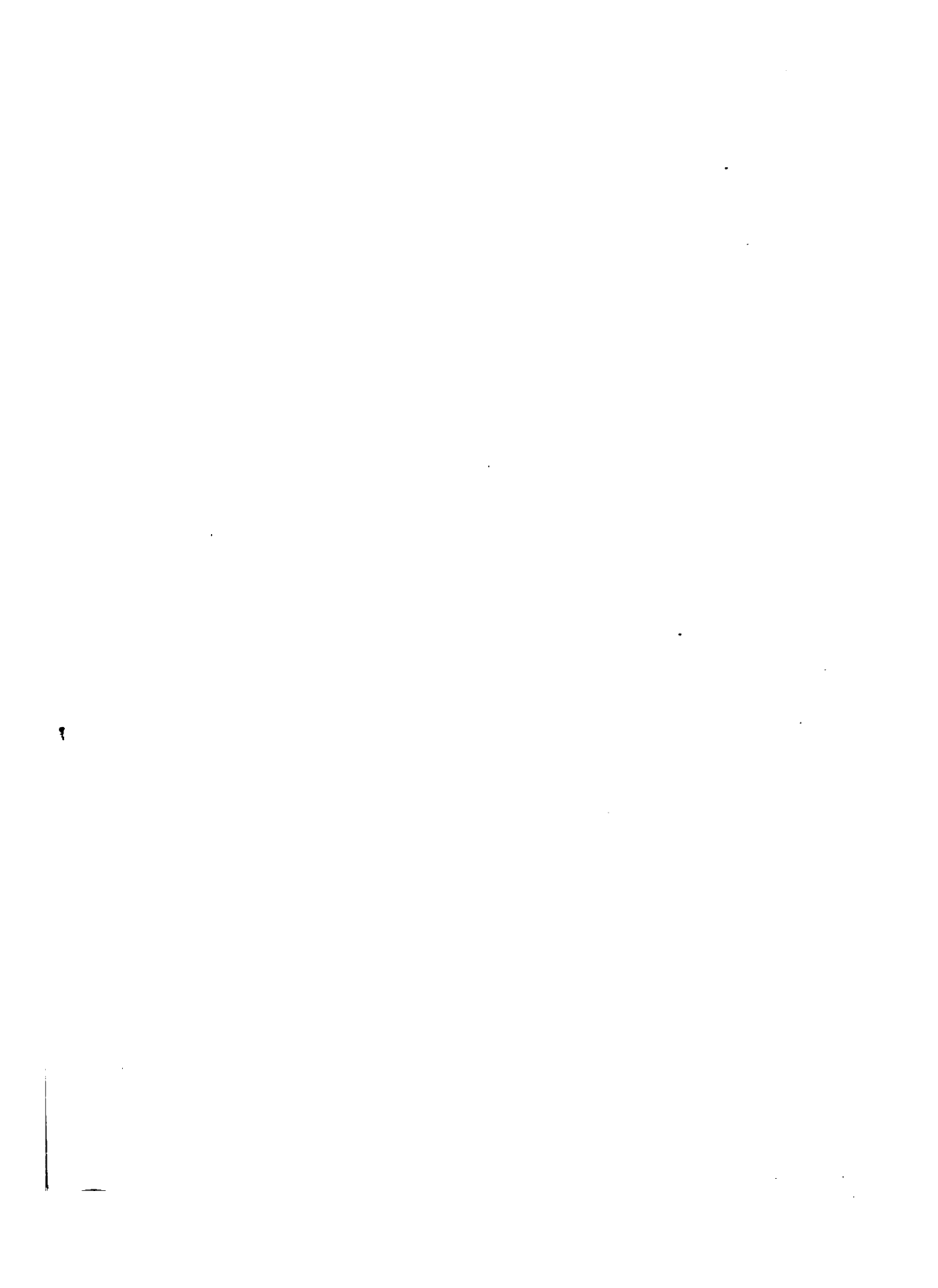
Damaris. (In horror) Jasper !

She sinks on seat L.

Lady Sybil. (Turns) Ay, Damaris, startle at the name, but I care not who knows it now ! For the



SYBIL AND DAMARIS.



“LOVE LAUGHS AT THE LOCKSMITH.” 41

pride that swells so strong in my bosom, I could stand out on the towers of Worcester, and cry to all the world—He, Jasper Cardew, is my dear, my own true knight. In my heart shall he be lord, till the King shall hold his own again and our hands may join as our hearts are one already. (*Behind seat L.*) Damaris, how pale. Fie, dear, I take his danger less to heart. I that love him so.

Moves down R. of bench.

Laughing.

Damaris. (*Slowly*) Ah, didst thou but know in what danger he stands thy cheek were whiter than mine.

Lady Sybil. (*Fiercely*) Danger! Why? What doth thou know of him?

Damaris. I . . . I . . . (*Rises, crosses R., how can I tell her?*) Didst thou not tell me thyself he was proscribed?

Lady Sybil. (*Down L.*) Ay, and worse than that, since the canting knaves have set his head at a price, five hundred crowns blood-money to the crop-eared caitiff who brings him prisoner into Worcester, or bears his head thither stuck on his butcher's pike!

With a mocking gesture.

Damaris. (*Calling out—horried*) Ah, Sybil, Sybil, it cannot be, say thou art but jesting, it were too horrible.

At bench R.C.

Lady Sybil. My words were heedless, dear. I must ever bethink me thy lord is one of the same traitorous roundheads. But comfort thy kind soul; the crafty Lord General hath o'er-reached himself and Jasper rides safer through the broad

Controlling herself, but a little annoyed at the interruption.

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shires since he who takes him takes therewith
the curse of Judas on his close-cropped pate.

[SYBIL *crosses to window*, DAMARIS *sits R.,
hiding her face.*

*Looking from
window.*

*Slowly and clearly.
Very naturally.*

*Crosses slowly to
door. Up L.*

Fumbles with lock.

Besides he is safe long since ; at grey dawn he
rode from the postern gate, and ere the sun was
high my father rode a hawking by the self-same
way, and will bring back word of his safety or
else he had been back ere now. (*Pause*) Damaris
—doth not the arquebuse slit in thy secret
chamber look on the road to Worcester ? (*Crosses
slowly to door*) I will up and see if there be no
sign of their coming, three squires and my cousin
Pearce rode with him and the keeper's lads with
the hawks. [SYBIL *tries door.*

Damaris. (*Wringing her hands*) Alas ! alas !
how may I compass to tell her.

*Still at back.
Looking round over
shoulder, but not at
Damaris.*

*Coming down, hands
clasped, eyes on
ceiling.*

Shaking her arm.

Lady Sybil. (*Laughing*) Why, Damaris, thy
fortalice is fast locked ! What mutinous hind
hath thy lord left thee for safe keeping ? Shall
I unbar the door and let the stupid howlet fly
. . . or peradventure one of thy maids
hath glanced with too roguish an eye—(*sees
DAMARIS*) Why Damaris . . . what aileth
thee . . . so mum and pale . . . Nay
sweetheart this passeth a jest . . . Art sick ?
(*kneels by her side*) Damaris, Damaris, speak
to me.

Brokenly.

Damaris. No, no, naught aileth me . . .
indeed, indeed it is not . . . I . . .

*A little
contemptuously.*

Lady Sybil. For me then thy grief ? Why, for
shame Damaris, hast learnt no greater courage in

these troublous times ?—To blench for the shadow of a danger past !

Damaris. (*Wringing her hands*) Ah, would it were ! ' would it were !

Lady Sybil. (*Sharply*) What meanest thou by that ? Ah, Damaris, speak. Jasper ? thou knowest some evil tidings of him ? Speak ! speak ! thy silence kills me.

Her voice suddenly grows hard.

Wildly.

[*DAMARIS rises and lifts up SYBIL, taking her hands.*

Damaris. It keeps back words must go near to kill thee in sober truth. (*SYBIL pushes her back with an exclamation*) Nay, little Sybil, hold my hands so—look in my eyes—would I hurt thee if my own life might save thee pain ? . . . but thy lover . . . his danger is *not* overpast.

SYBIL pacing up and down.

Lady Sybil. Ah ! They know him ! they ride to take him ! but how ? how ? his horse was swift, he is safe ere this—he were taken else long since . . . (*DAMARIS turns away.*) Damaris, not that ! he is not taken.

With growing horror.

Almost in a whisper.

Pause.

Damaris. Sybil, may God's grace strengthen thee.

Slowly.

Lady Sybil. (*With a passionate cry*) Taken—taken—but where ? not to Worcester—we heard thence an hour ago—once past the Red Ford he was safe with the friends he rode to find. They could not fail him—where ? where ? Damaris ! thy pallor at his name ! thy silence ! the door

Up at window.

Comes down R. of bench.

Her voice suddenly changes as her eyes fall on the door L.

44 "LOVE LAUGHS AT THE LOCKSMITH."

locked ! Ah, he is here ! he is here ! (*she runs to door and tries to force it calling*) Jasper, Jasper !

[*DAMARIS follows her up to door, where she is beating helplessly, crying out Jasper's name.*]

Damaris. (*Trying to stop her*) Sybil, dear, Sybil, calm thy cries, he cannot hear thee. Child, child, thou wilt but bruise thy hands upon the door.

[*SYBIL flings her off furiously and comes down C.*]

Lady Sybil. False, false ! what care I for thy pity, give him back to me, if there be any truth or honour left in thee . . . If thy word, thy love is not a lie too vile for thought, unbar the door and let me in to him.

Damaris. Nay, Sybil, for shame ; is this the courage thou canst boast ? to rail like a mad-woman. Hush thee, hush thee, and hearken—these three hours he is safe, till . . .

[*Turns L. down.*]

Lady Sybil. (*Suddenly arrested*) These three hours . . . ? Till thy traitor George returns then ! So ! he goes to denounce him (*comes down L. of bench*), to purse the crowns, the price of the blood he sells to Cromwell's vengeance ! It was nobly done, and well hast thou fooled me—since I mind he rode off on his Judas errand and left thee to mock me, with soft words and kind memories, lest I should find and save my love . . . Ay, and even yet will I save him—back from the door—there are honest men still

These lines are broken by Sybil's passionate exclamations.

Damaris moves down towards bench.

Again Sybil breaks in with angry ejaculations and goes up to the door

With bitter scorn.

She is rapidly losing all control of herself.

Pointing up to window.

in the Shires have not sold their souls to do Oliver's bidding, and thou and thy knaves shall know a Lowell's hand is strong to strike for King and love . . . stand back.

Faces Damaris.

[She rushes at the door, her arm raised as if to strike ; DAMARIS stops her with one hand.

Damaris. Sybil ! *(They stand for a moment facing one another)* if thy madness leave thee thought of reason or of justice listen to me—I am George Lockyer's wife—he left that man, be he lover of thine or no—trusted to my fealty. Lift thy hand to wrest him from me by force, and I stand here in my husband's stead—Wife's love to maid's love, that his honour fail not the truest man on God's ground, even . . . through my love to thee.

Sybil falls back a little.

Damaris speaks very quickly with growing strength.

SYBIL, *turns away.*

DAMARIS *goes on more gently.*

Besides—bethink thee, thy father is hence—he holds not fully for Charles Stuart's cause—where wilt thou turn for help ?

Lady Sybil. *(Wavering)* Alas ! woe is me ! I know not.

[She flings herself on the bench sobbing passionately.

Damaris. Dear maid, dear sister Sybil, come, let us take counsel together of this matter—turn thy heart to me once again, come.

Kneeling by her and putting her arms round her.

[SYBIL, turning to DAMARIS and putting her arms round her neck.

Lady Sybil. Damaris, dear friend, how canst thou pardon my mad railing—yet what way—what counsel may there be? speak to me, help me, lest my courage fail me yet again. They will kill him—ah, how can thy husband be so cruel . . . one so gentle as my love—so brave—so true.

Hiding her face in tears.

The contrast in the description of the same men must be well brought out.

Damaris must face the audience as much as possible.

In rather a prim tone.

This explanation must be clear but rapid in delivery, else the scene will drag.

With sudden pity.

Damaris rises.

She springs to Damaris, who has turned away L., and puts her arms round her neck.

Damaris. (*Very earnestly*) Sybil, by the truth of my love, George knew naught of him or of the prize; else assuredly he would sooner have cut off his right hand than laid finger on the man. He found him at the dawn riding wild and careless over our fields; challenged, he berated them for crop-eared knaves, and rode away. His horse stumbled, throwing him, and they laid hands on him and bound him and brought him here—raging and cursing like one possessed. He held despatches and would tell naught of his purpose, so, deeming him but a spy, George rode by the town to bid them send guards to bring him in safety to Worcester, or let him go free. We questioned naught, deeming him, poor gentleman, distraught, as indeed he was with love and misery, poor soul, poor soul—thy love and die so young.

Lady Sybil. (*Eagerly, in a tone of confident pleading*) Ah, Damaris he cannot, he shall not die—didst thou not say of thyself, had George known, his own hand had set Jasper free? It is but to do his part and let him go. I will see him safely bestowed. Thy pity shall save us both.

Damaris. (*Coldly*) And risk my husband's life and honour! How will he look, think you, when

he finds his wife false to the charge left her—
caring naught for the danger he has run, when
they who ride with him turn in anger on the
guide who leads them to an empty cage?

She moves towards the door L.

Lady Sybil. (Triumphantly) 'Thou wilt set him
free! Ah, kindest, truest friend—But thy husband
shall not think thee false. We will pinion thine
arms and bind thee here fast to the oaken bench
—they shall think thou wast constrained to yield
the keys and set free thy prisoner and so shall
George and

*She takes in only
Damaris's
admission that she
can save Jasper.*

*[The expression in DAMARIS's face suddenly
stops her.*

Damaris. And how shall mine eyes meet his,
whose heart I hold in free gift for mine as freely
given him? How shall I bear myself, Sybil Lowell,
think you, as I stand and lie to him of the trust
so truly given me? 'Think you the false words
would not die 'ere they were spoken?

Coldly.

Turns L.

Lady Sybil. Ah, I know not! only this I know
—He is my love who lies in yonder chamber, and
by my life or by thine must I save him, if need
there be, for all there is sister troth 'twixt me and
thee, since so it is with a woman's love to her
lover, that this is only right which may stead
him at his need, though it cost all the world
beside!

Wringing her hands.

*[During this speech DAMARIS has come to a
definite decision.*

Damaris. Yet standeth there a higher right for
thee and for me Sybil, and by it give I thee thy

Quietly.

heart's desire, though it cost *me* the love that is all the world to me.

Lady Sybil. (*Awed*) Damaris !

Damaris. (*Quickly*) Hush ! no more words lest the time go by and we be lost indeed ! No guilt of blood shall rest on the hand of him I love ; and thy lover shall go unharmed, to find what may haply win him to a truer path—watch from the window—I go to send the maids and men to tasks shall leave them no eyes or ears for us ; I will lead him through the wicket and without shalt thou meet him and bring him to a place of safety, for this night at least. Meanwhile I will return to meet those who come to take him.

[*Moves down to door.*

Lady Sybil. (*Fearfully*) Return to face thy husband's anger ?

Damaris. (*Simply*) Even so.

Passionately.

Lady Sybil. I cannot ; I cannot let thee do this thing.

Damaris. It must be even so dear—there is no way but this ; no way to save my husband from so foul a blood-guiltiness and thee from life-long sorrow. Hush, dear ; go quickly !

Puts it back, and goes to door L.

[*SYBIL crosses slowly to window ; DAMARIS to the press and takes key, then SYBIL looks from window and cries out.*

Lady Sybil. (*Looking from window and trying to dash the tears from her eyes*) Damaris, quick, quick ! Tell me ; I dare not trust mine eyes, they

are dim with tears ; look who rides over the hill ?

DAMARIS *hurries to window, R.*

[SYBIL *hides her face on DAMARIS'S shoulder, turning her back to the window and facing audience.*

Damaris. Thy father—Sir Richard Lowell !

[*Looking out over SYBIL'S shoulder.*

Lady Sybil. And with him—at his side—Damaris, who is it ?—speak.

After waiting a moment.

Damaris. Now praise Heaven, it is George, my husband ! of a surety they have met and stayed him ! See, Sybil ; behind them ride thy father's men ; now they are at the bridge—George speaks—thy father laughs—Sybil they are pointing to this place. Thy father hath told him—they come to set thy Jasper free.

[LADY SYBIL *falls on her knees by DAMARIS.*

Lady Sybil. Ah, merciful heaven.

Damaris. (*Holding her up*) Have courage yet, dear, now that hope is here.

Lady Sybil. (*Sobbing*) Hold me fast awhile so ; thou who didst not grudge me the love of thy soul in my extremity ; dear to me henceforth as the life thy husband comes to free !

Damaris. (*Lightly*) But that he *shall* not !

Lady Sybil. (*Looking up bewildered.*) Shall not ?

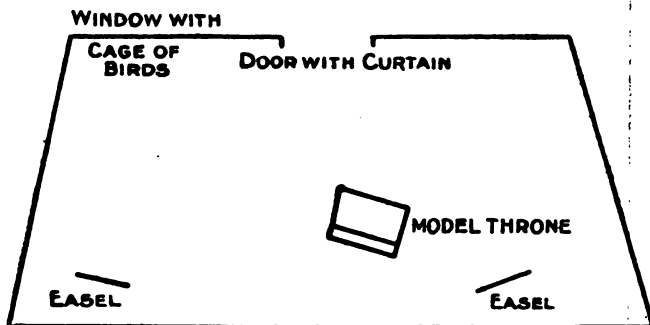
Damaris. (*In merry mockery*) Shall not ! Am I not mistress here ? None but thy love, my Sybil, shall play the locksmith to that door (*Crosses to the press*). See, the key, I go to tell my lord how near his garrison played traitor. (*Crosses to SYBIL*) Give me time, dear, to tell my tale and win my pardon 'ere this gay lover of thine come down to laugh at our country ways. (*Gives her the key*) One kiss so, farewell.

Exit L. door.

[*SYBIL runs to the door L.U. ; at the moment the curtain falls she is bending over the lock, calling*

Lady Sybil. Jasper ! Jasper !

“PEINT PAR FRANÇOIS BOUCHER.”



“PEINT PAR FRANÇOIS BOUCHER.”

“*Rosewater Raphael—en couleur de rose.*”

After Mr. Austin Dobson’s “Story of Rosina.”

PERIOD—I750.

ROSINE *A little peasant girl.*
UNE MARQUISE.

SCENE—*A Studio ; curtained door at back ; studio properties ; two easels R. and L. with their backs to the audience, on each side of them a curtained picture. Model throne I.C. Cage with two love birds on a nail up R.*

Rosine (Peeping through the curtains, calls loudly) Monsieur ! Monsieur !

[She comes in a little anxiously.]

Did monsieur wait ?
Not here ! Yet surely I am late !
To-day of all days in the year.

*[She glances at a bunch of snowdrops
and violets in her hand, then at the
picture R.]*

If I should dare ! Yet what's to fear !

*[Placing the flowers above and below the
picture.]*

The snowdrops—so ; the violets—here.
He called them like my eyes. Ah, no !
That can be but some poet's talk.
And yet that one—that perfect walk
When the first sunshine of the spring
Made every bird preen up its wing,
And he and I went forth together
In the clear, golden, growing weather,
And all day heard my nestlings tell
That song of love they sing so well.
That day he said Ah, poor Rosine !—
You are bewitched, 'tis easy seen.
He, the great painter—you, my girl,
Scarce fit to touch his ruffles' furl—
And yet he said my eyes were fair ;
And that the twilight matched my hair.
That these dear little friends of mine
Had not a song more blythe than mine.
And then the picture—that must show.
He says he never painted so
That, at his call, roses and dew
Had come to make my blushes true.
Oh, saints in heaven, hear my cry :
When this is ended, let me die.

*She runs up lightly
to the birds in their
cages.*

*Looks back at easel,
comes slowly back
and uncovers canvas,
stands looking at it.*

*Suddenly kneeling
in front of the easel
and resting her head
against it.*

How could I live without his smile,
Who sit and watch him all this while ?

[A voice is heard calling outside. ROSINE cowers down behind the easel in a dark corner formed by a screen and remains hidden.]

Marquise. (Outside) My painter !

[The curtains are drawn sharply back and a Marquise stands in the opening holding them apart with her two hands. She has on a big cloak "couleur muraille," with a hood, covering a Watteau shepherdess dress with paniers and "talons rouges"; her hair is lightly powdered, and she wears a little wreath of roses. She looks round a moment, then steps in.]

Since you come so late
Next time 'twill be your turn to wait !
And since—to-day—the cat's away,
We'll give "Favette" a holiday !

Glancing
mischievously round
the studio.

[With a sudden gesture she whirls off her cloak, flinging it on the model throne, and sweeps a curtsy to the curtained door by which she had just entered.]

Madame la Marquise ! Enter, pray.

[ROSINE behind the screen utters a sharp little cry.]

Marquise. (Starting) A cry ! (She hurries up to the door, and stooping picks up a ridiculous little dog from between the curtains.) Oh, chéri ! angel ! come !

Caressing the little dog, she has carried him to the model throne, where she makes him beg, kneeling with her back to Rosine's corner.

My Zouzou ! say, what have I done ?
Left you to break your little heart ?
My treasure—cherub ! Could we part ?
'Tis mine, alas ! that first would break,
Sweetest of creatures, for your sake !
Now let me see with what an air
His honour takes the easy chair.

[She twists a piece of paper into a cocked hat and plants it on his head.]

A hat, my Lord !

[Sticking a paintbrush under his paw.]

A stick, your Grace !
Sapristi ! what a dismal face !
You little stupid ! must I place
Your paws again !—my patience, go !
'Twould tease a saint to see you so.

[Runs lightly to the birds and opens the door of their cage.]

Feeding them.

Ah, little friends, you hear my voice ?
Sugar and millet, take your choice.
So—on my finger—flirt and preen !
Your master sits as tame, I ween,
When she he deems a village maid—
With downcast eyelids half afraid. . . .

Rosine. (Gives a sudden uncontrollable cry, half a sob.)

Frightened.

*Marquise. Surely that was a cry I heard !
Come out ! Who are you ?
[ROSINE rises and comes forward.]*

Speak !

With an effort.

Rosine.

Rosine.

Marquise. The model ! What, behind the screen
While I was talking ? Have you seen . . . ?

*Much relieved
laughing.*

Rosine. (Silently bows her head.)

Marquise. Oh, well ! 'twas time to drop the
mask,
Since I had ended all my task.
A merry life the jest had run !
'Twas time the masquerade was done.

Rosine. (Horried) The jest !

Marquise. Why, how the creature stares !
Ah, I forgot ; poor Boucher swears
That next to mine *your* eyes are bright.

*[Catching her arm she turns her rather roughly
round to the light, examines her critically,
and seems pleased.]*

There, child, no need to tremble so.
Your eyes *are* fair. Had it not been . . .

*[She laughs, and, crossing to the model throne,
takes up a little silver mirror and looks
at her own face.]*

That one . . . if he had never seen. . . .

Rosine. (L.) He said a peasant girl had come
One morning—starving to his door,
And out of pity . . . Ah, before !
He loved me so before *you* came !
Ah, cruel ! . . .

Marquise. Bah ! an idle flame—
A painter's fancy, lightly won.

*[Springs up and comes down from throne
looking R.C.]*

Al mics.

Oh, had you seen that "Comedie!"
A knock. "Who calls there?" "Pity me!
Open, monsieur, for heaven's grace;"—
("Good heavens, what an angel face!")
"If Monsieur cared . . . They say at times
He pays well for the face he limns.
And all the winter long we starve.
If Monsieur knew! I tried to carve
These little trifles for the nuns,

ROSINE makes a movement of horror.

They are so good,—but no one comes
To buy, and bread is dear to-day."
(I hid my face, and turned away.)
"Come in, my child, and let me see."
(His grave eyes took good note of me.)
"Yes, fair enow and graced beside,
With something not to be denied—
A grace, a dignity, an air!
Not like poor *Blowsabella* there."

*Pointing carelessly
at the picture R.
Beside herself.*

Rosine. He said that! He!

A little disconcerted.

Marquise. Or thought it! There,
Why should I tell the rest? You're fair,
But when he felt once more the arts,
The grace the Court alone imparts (*moving as she
speaks*),

Then all was changed; once more restored
He hangs upon my lightest word! (*Suddenly
serious*)

How could you think *we* watched unmoved,
While, truant to the life he loved,
The court's great painter lived recluse
In dalliance with a peasant muse?

Crosses swiftly to picture R.

Look for yourself—'tis easy seen :
The sky too blue—the grass too green,
The whole ill-lighted, vulgar truth,—
The vision of some crazy youth ! (Moves away
L. laughing.)

*Throws back
curtain.
Shades her eyes.*

*Rosine. (Has moved slowly to easel. She looks
silently at the picture for a time and then speaks
dreamily)* He made it out in Fontainebleau ;
Above birds flitted to and fro
And sang of love to him and me.
I was so glad I could not see
When he would have me look and tell
If now at least it was not well.
For sometimes I had e'en confessed
I never had seen shepherds dressed
As in his pictures, shy and pale ;
Or sheep so white or maids so frail
And lovely . . .

*Turning to
Marquise and
speaking timidly.*

Marquise. Why, child, *that* is art !
To paint the naked grass green land
That is no task for poet's hand !
Now, see (*goes to easel L.*), look here ; so nymphs
might keep
In Arcady *ideal* sheep.
And the soft stream of tender sighs
Flow smooth 'neath zephyr-haunted skies.
No rough, harsh discords, only smiles
On sea and land, enchanted isles,
And song and dance and happy days,
Set to the beat of sugar'd lays.

*Interrupting
eagerly.*

*Recites in a
sentimental tone.*

Rosine. Have they no hearts in Arcady ?

Breaking in dully.

Marquise. Hearts ?

Ruffled.

Rosine. Yes ; that cry so wearily

For something they must never win—
Something that even to hope is sin.

[*She hides her face a moment sobbing; the MARQUISE has turned away half angered, and sits on the model throne touching up her hair in the mirror.*

Madame, the foolish jest is past;
How could I dream the spring would last?
That picture . . . Oh, I never thought
I loved to watch him while he wrought.
It seemed that if he painted so,
Some few sad hearts might lighter grow
To see God made the world so fair;
But those at Court would never care.
They know these things—I had no right.
If he should come, Madame, to-night,
Would you, perhaps, have grace to say
Rosine has gone away to-day,
And will not sit again? At home
They need me, but I thought—indeed
I thought, he liked to paint me. Plead
With him to pardon me, and hold
I did not mean to be so bold.

Suddenly recovering herself and speaking with simple dignity.

Waving her away.

Passionately.

Marquise. If I remember. There, child—go.

Rosine. Oh, please remember, for I know
I shall not see him . . . for so long.

[*She turns away slowly R. The MARQUISE is fretting uncomfortably. ROSINE comes up to the picture and sees the flowers.*

Smelling them.

These violets, their scent is strong,
If you would place them on your breast,
They would remind you. (*MARQUISE idly takes*

the flowers. ROSINE rises and moves away very slowly R.) I could rest, I think, if I could say "He knows."

*Kneeling by
Marquise*

[*She creeps out slowly, shaking with sobs, but without looking back. A pause. The MARQUISE shivers a little forlornly, and then gets up.*]

Marquise. Ugh! she is gone. How cold it grows.

Zouzou! Where is the creature hid!

[*She sees a big basket near the throne and huddles the little dog unceremoniously into it.*]

In with you while I shut the lid.

Pauses, looking after ROSINE.

That child! Ay, since it grows so late—
I vow, with all her idle prate,
I have the vapours! There, enough!
What care I for such painters' stuff!

Indignantly.

[*She suddenly sees the little cocked hat and pencil; her face lights up with mischief, and she begins to write, resting on the canvas of picture L., repeating the words she writes.*]

"Sir—since you came—so late—to-day—
"Favette and Rose—both went their way—
"Some time, perchance, you too may sigh—
"That fame herself—so passed you by.
"When next you need a model fair,
"Seek one at Court, they're cheaper there;

Thinks a moment.

" And in the land of Arcady

" Hearts may not break so easily ! "

*[She has quite regained her good humour, and
fastens paper and violets together on the
corner of the easel.*

So—with the flowers. (*Catches up basket and
cloak.*) My angel, come !

*[Looks back a moment at the door, her draperies
caught round her as if starting to run,
and with a look of delighted malice.*

I think, *this* time, the jest is done.

CURTAIN.

